

Capitalistic Anthropocentrism to Nature and Papua Women: Study of Ecofeminism in Novel Tanah Tabu

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Abstract

This research was conducted to investigate capitalistic anthropocentrism to nature and woman in Tanah Tabu. Here, Freeport is an actor of capitalistic anthropocentrism while Baliem Valley and female character in Tanah Tabu are representatives of exploited objects. By analysis, the theory of ecofeminism by Vandana Shiva is used here to answer the questions of the research. Therefore, the implication is to study the act of capitalistic anthropocentrism of Freeport examined based on the purpose of western colonialism (United States of America) that came to Papua by developing mining industry. In the process, the mining industry run by capitalist faced the problem being tried to solve by using modern science and spirit of developing a civilization as an effort to cover their actions. In this case, ecofeminism shows the role of women in struggling their exploited home (nature). This fact appears from the relationship between women's domestic life and nature that cannot be vanished. The discussion results in this study are first, the character of capitalistic anthropocentrism by Freeport is known from their motives in developing civilization by modern science, modernism toward conservatism, and colonialism. Secondly, ecofeminism puts female character Tanah Tabu in the dualism of role; as a victim and a fighter against capitalistic anthropocentrism. Lastly, the reason why the female character is presented here is that ecofeminism views nature is as a woman who is pregnant and delivers life.

Keywords: capitalistic anthropocentrism, ecofeminism, nature, woman, Baliem Valley (Papua)

Introduction

*Tanah Tabu*¹ tells about an epoch of women of Dani Tribe to struggle in act of impoverishment and oppression by the gold mining company, Freeport. Reading *Tanah Tabu*, similarly, discerns the struggle of a female character in husband stigma as well as in the patriarchal culture of Dani Tribe. In *Tanah Tabu*, there is no story which states about a male character who is on female's side as if the writer illustrates man as the main cause of tribal warfare, a person who commits domestic violence, and the political person who is totalitarian and militaristic. Though there are two male characters who are on Mabel's side; Pum and Kwee, in fact, they are actually "an old dog" and "a piglet". Another uniqueness of this story is that the point of view of the first person "aku" is narrated by three different characters; Leksi, Pum, and Kwee. They, by turns, tell about the journey of Mabel's life that is categorized as a problematic character. Problematic character is a character who takes a turn to run the conflict in the story. The personality of Mabel who is brave, hard-working, and modern as well as tolerant is constructed by the complexity of every problem she has faced (Seralurin & Yendra, 2019).

Mabel's fight is her effort to get right to prosperity. She is aware of what can cause her capitalized. This awareness gives her the power to know how to live with nature and how to treat it better than men do. But, because of the mining activity of Freeport, it can cause the distance between Mabel and nature. Freeport uses capitalistic anthropocentrism in its mining process as its foundation. The act of anthropocentrism in *Tanah Tabu* was actions to try to cut the relationship between nature and women, so it encouraged them to make a movement to fight against the company. Mabel responded to this case by trying to be an eco-warrior in conserving forest, plants, land, and water in Baliem Valley that had been a source of life for local people.

If it is studied by the theory of ecofeminism from Vandana Shiva's² perspective, the social instability in Tanah Tabu was the effect of a development program that hurt the women's integrity and also destroyed the productivity of local nature. According to her, the human is the main actor who is responsible for the extinction of the ecosystem on

¹ Anindita S. Thayf. Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka. Mei, 2009.

² Vandana Shiva. *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Survival in India*. London: Zed Book. 1988.

earth. Anthropocentrism view is perpetuated for activity in using natural resources. Because humans' desires are never satisfied, they, with their knowledge, always try to fulfill their desires in many ideas leading to exploitation of natural resources.³ One of the ideas is industrialization initiative by reason of meeting the needs. The concept of the idea is reductive. This point provides the basis for Shiva's view that reductionism is a basic shape of applying modern science and developmentalism that present capitalization of nature as its part.⁴ She believes that the two aspects encourage anthropocentric view to become the main pillars of development in the modern era.

Based on the explanation above, it can be inferred that anthropocentrism is constructed from humans' desire who want to get prosperity. Because humans' desires are never satisfied, then they find other ways to exploit natural resource to satisfy their desires. The humans, in this case, can be labeled to western people who are always hungry for developing their civilization. For fulfilling their desire, western people wrap up the anthropocentric ideology in development programs. By modern science, the development programs are run, and they give capitalistic soul and masculine spirit to them. Their targets are countries in the third world having abundant natural resources that are still virgin. Here are the points of capitalistic anthropocentrism concept which shows its character to exploit nature and dismiss the woman role:

- a) Capitalistic anthropocentrism: *Because humans' desires are never satisfied, they, with their knowledge, always try to fulfill their desires in many ideas leading to exploitation of natural resources.*
- b) The characters of capitalistic anthropocentrism are oppressive/exploitative, reductive, colonial, and based on modern science and technology.
- c) Capitalistic anthropocentrism sees nature as an object, tool, commodity, and facility to satisfy humans' need.
- d) Capitalistic anthropocentrism comes as an ideology to run development programs wrapped up by the development of civilization.
- e) Capitalistic anthropocentrism has a conspiracy with modern science: *ignoring the method of ecological science and holistic approach, and also weakening woman's ability as an expert.*

What is identified and clarified by Shiva in her ecofeminism will be applied to the object of this research. Therefore the character of capitalistic anthropocentrism done by Freeport in Baliem Valley that causes destruction of its nature and instability of the women of Dani Tribe, that is reflected in *Tanah Tabu* will appear. Also, ecofeminism will show the role of the women that their domestic position is more close to nature. Besides they become a victim, they are also the savior of themselves and the future of the ecosystem.

Research Method

This research is qualitative research. The first step taken is determining the material object and formal object. The material object is Tanah Tabu by Anindita S. Thayf while the formal object is the ecofeminism theory by Vandana Shiva that shows the act of capitalistic anthropocentrism; development project of capitalist and oppressive and reductive science.

Data in this research are divided into two data: primary data and secondary data. Primary data consist of a word, phrase, sentence cited from Tanah Tabu (published by Gramedia Pustaka Utama, Jakarta, May 2009; 237 pages) while secondary data are resources taken from journal, book, newspaper, audio or video related to primary data.

Result and Analysis

Masculine Character in *Tanah Tabu: The Rapist*

Men of Dani Tribe: saved in patrilineal power

Impartiality of the male character in Tanah Tabu to female indicates that imperishable patrilineal system is confirmed by the men of Dani Tribe. The patrilineal system in Dani Tribe causes the men always feel that women are dominated by them. In Tanah Tabu, it is reflected that though the women are dominated by men's power because the men are an actor of domestic violence, the main cause of tribal warfare, or the cause of impoverishment in their family, the women's life, indeed, cannot be far from them.

In the women's view, the men of Dani Tribe were born as a brave man, a good hunter, and a man who never give up on his tribe. Therefore if the women can be a wife of the men of Dani Tribe, especially someone who is rich, it

³ Ibid. Shiva. 1988: 3

⁴ Maria Mies. *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*. London: Zed Books. 1986: 55.

will be a great fortune for them. Then, it becomes their dream because it could guarantee their future. The men can be young or old, alcoholic, or even a bad-tempered husband who may commit domestic violence. They, the women, are willing to be the second, third, or fourth wife. Because of poverty, they put hope as a Dani men's wife on the top of everything and visualize it until the dream comes true. Because of this, the bad stigma of the men of the Dani tribe is changed by hope. The bad stigma of Dani men can be investigated from the following quotation.

"The arrogant man who felt he was a more powerful and high degree of women. The including a group of people who claim to protect and respect women, but absolutely never want to hear and appreciate the deed, let alone women's the voice." (Thayf, 2009)

Dani men's behavior that is authoritarian and hard to women is a construction of primitive social culture. It is hard to break the patrilineal system, in which it puts man as a powerful human and a woman as a powerless individual, as long as the tradition of Dani Tribe is still strengthened in its society. For this reason, permissive habit appears when Dani men do not stand by women's side or care about them. Actually, in Tanah Tabu, Dani women live in harmony with nature in Baliem Valley. However, the relationship between women and nature is ignored by Dani men. It is indicated that there is an act to limit the freedom of Dani women. They, on purpose, weaken the women's movement in order to make their position up and powerful so they can be a decision maker of any activities.

Freeport: A Ghost that Rape

Freeport has a masculine character in Tanah Tabu. Dani Tribe met the Freeport man in the first time when they came for Mr. Piet. At that time they thought that Mr. Piet was a ghost because in their mind a ghost was represented by Mr. Piet's appearance; white skinned, blond hair, and tall. That western physical appearance was strange for Dani Tribe who has black skin, frizzle hair, short body even only wear Koteka. Mr. Piet's coming was a mark for Freeport in pioneering its industry in gold, silver and copper mining in Erstberg and Grasberg. Mabel, then, realized that Freeport dominated society in Baliem Valley who is conservative and gave full respect to their ancestral heritage. In consequence, the existence of Freeport, similarly, is a threat of Dani's prosperity in Baliem Valley. In the following citation, the construction of Freeport from Mabel's view is clear to see.

"In a place that I first realized there was a certain humanity a very ardent rival God. They made a little world where they are very powerful. Their words are commands. Their weapon is a whip the devil at once Kiss Angel of death who is able to make you a lifetime of disability or even loss of life. While their uniforms is a very nice samara robe to hide their corruption. Chicanery behind the grandeur. The place was the downright hellish world. (Thayf, 2009)"

Freeport as a subject of capitalistic anthropocentrism tried to exploit natural resources in Baliem Valley by developing mining industry that has capitalistic ideology and scientific foundation. The performer of exploitation represented the character of Freeport's capitalistic anthropocentrism which uses development of civilization, modernism, and conspiracy of colonialism as its motif. That makes imbalance development in Baliem Valley.

Based on the motives, it can be concluded that Freeport through its mining industry just set out imperialism and be apathetic toward the future of the ecosystem in Baliem Valley. The destruction of the ecosystem is a sign of a broken relationship between Mabel as a woman from Dani Tribe and nature in which she worked as a farmer and a vegetable seller where it is produced by Baliem Valley. Besides, capitalistic anthropocentrism affected the devastation of the conservative side in Dani Tribe, and also Freeport took parts in spreading the ideology of capitalism in their life.

The dualism of Woman Tanah Tabu: As a Victim and Fighter

In this case, ecofeminism reveal shows the role of Dani women as a victim reflected in Mabel's life. In addition, the focus of this study is on Mabel's problematic life known as a problematic character in Tanah Tabu. She is a victim because of her domestic life depending on Baliem Valley's ecosystem. Therefore, when Freeport founded an area of its mining industry and used anthropocentric ideology in its process in Baliem Valley, Mabel's life was not able to synergy with Baliem Valley. Here is a citation to support.

"Because that's what Mabel willingly banting bone work anything to finance the school selected and meet all his needs. Of course, the Mace also helped: manage the vegetable garden and *petatas* belonging to Mabel since morning until noon, then selling in the market until the afternoon break. While Mabel selling lime and areca nut are made and gathered himself, but instead he took the betel nut from the tree, having previously dealt with homework. (Thayf, 2009)"

Mabel's suffering caused herself unproductive in farming and could not make the agricultural product as commodity trading. Moreover, Mabel faced the situation in which the house where she lived was a rented house built by Freeport. It was a shelter when she was driven out from her parents' village. It means that Mabel did not own the land but only rented the land inherited by her forefathers.

Mabel becomes a fighter because of her noble soul as a Dani woman who always protects and saves her legacy which is natural resources of Baliem Valley. For that reason, in ecofeminism, Mabel's is positioned as a woman who still saves the principle of feminism and supports the principle of ecology toward nature. Here is a supporting citation.

"As the wife, Mable knew very well his job and always work on everything as best as possible. He takes care of the house, her husband, Johanis, also their orchards. He also always like myself making new *noken*, weaving never letting the place of *sagu* until empty. (Thayf, 2009)"

The following quotation, "Everyone knows Mabel hates the gold company that is at the end of the street. She often criticizes sharply whenever she talks about the company."⁵ Proves that Mabel saves and supports the principle of feminism. According to Shiva, the principle of feminism is not always supported by all women. After feminism is marginalized by masculine power, many movements of feminism take the step that is out of the essential principle of feminism. Mabel's hatred turned out to be a great idea to fight against Freeport. It was a demonstration. Here is supporting quotation.

"Told you from yesterdays, the better we are demoing the only. The point! No, doubt there are meetings or talks. (Thayf, 2009)"

Because of that Mabel turned ready to start her new life in Baliem Valley that had gotten destructive acts. Her readiness indicates the awareness of impoverishment and act of duping either for her or for Dani Tribe. Mabel's opposition toward Freeport is shown in her effort to do big demonstrations against them that is the main cause of problems in her life. She also made her son, Leksi, go to school though it was really hard for her to do to counter act of duping made by Freeport. Then she never gave up striving against Freeport policy. Above all, Mabel's fight against acts of destroying the ecosystem in Baliem Valley is seen in her farming activities to cultivate the peatlands and replant the seed after the harvesting season.

Nature is Like a Woman be Pregnant and Delivers Life: Ecofeminism of Woman in *Tanah Tabu*

The reason why the female character of *Tanah Tabu* is presented as fighters against capitalistic anthropocentrism of Freeport is that both nature and woman in ecofeminism has the same characteristic which is can be pregnant and delivers life, so the reason of existing of female character can be studied from ecofeminism perspective in viewing that women are representative of the motherland. About her making Baliem Valley as a taboo, it is the way to save the sanctity of her ancestors, and it is the same as saving herself. This act can make Baliem Valley still productive so that it will guarantee Mabel's life if nature (Baliem Valley) is protected from destruction.

Other reasons are opposition, interpreting woman as a victim; the awareness of Mabel as a victim of anthropocentrism and impartiality of the men in her tribe take her as a savior for herself. Her movement of opposing act is a picture of a pioneering female movement that cares about the sustainability of ecosystem and alertness in starting a new life.

Nature produces, a woman produces life. It is another sense to place Mabel as a fighter. The abundant natural resources in Baliem Valley prove that Baliem Valley gives life for Dani Tribe. Mabel's profession as a farmer and greengrocer shows her hard work in living her family's life helped by nature of Baliem Valley. It can be said that there is cooperation between Mabel and nature in Baliem Valley in the process of giving life for mutual prosperity.

In another discussion, Femininity: a pet is a child; the existence of Pum and Kwee is as a hero in Mabel's family. In fact, they are just an old dog and a piglet. The partiality of Pum and Kwee prove that they are loyal to who keeps them. If it's investigated from Mabel's perspective, the good relationship between them (Mabel and Pum and Kwee) that lives with Mabel for years represents another action of ecofeminism constructed from the feminine soul of Mabel.

⁵ Ibid. Thayf. 2009:133.

Conclusion

Because of capitalistic anthropocentrism of Freeport performing in this case, ecofeminism puts a woman in the dualism of role. The first, she is as Dani woman (Mabel) becoming a victim of her domestic side depending on nature in Baliem Valley. Baliem Valley is a home, yard, garden, or farm field. Her eliminated position from her nature will ease Freeport to exploit natural resources of Baliem Valley. Another role is a fighter who opposes Freeport policy. It is because Dani women still keep and support the principle of feminism and conservatism toward their ancestors. Accordingly, Mabel seems more ready to face a new life than man.

The existence of Mabel as a fighter is because of her entity as Dani woman who respects her nature as a manifestation of her ancestors. Nature of Baliem Valley is taboo for Mabel. Hence, the process of making it as a taboo represents her as a part of Baliem Valley. Her energy to fight for her life and her nature expresses her effort to create synergy between the principle of feminism and principle of ecology. The principle of feminism leads to a feminist movement that is full of the spirit of empathy, mercy, solidarity, and nature conservation.

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